WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computer implemented method for processing prescription data representing a plurality of prescription drugs, said method comprising the steps of:

arranging received prescription data that corresponds to a first prescription drug into a new record of a predetermined format containing an identifier for identifying said patient and further containing a first name of said first prescription drug;

accessing a plurality of pre-stored records of said predetermined format, each pre-stored record containing information on a plurality of prescription drugs previously prescribed for respective patients;

comparing said identifier in said new record with each identifier located in the pre-stored records to find a matching pre-stored record associated with said patient;

comparing said first name of said first prescription drug with a second name of a second prescription drug located in the found matching pre-stored record; and

identifying said first prescription drug as a new therapy start for said patient if said first name is not substantially identical to said second name.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising determining whether types of said first and second names are brand or generic if said first name is not substantially identical to said second name, converting one of said first and second names to the type of the remaining name if the types are different, and ascertaining an equivalency between said first and second names based on the converted name.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising collecting the pre-stored records over a predetermined time interval.

4. The method according to claim 1, wherein said predetermined format further contains a date of dispensing said prescription drug to said patient and a dosage of said prescription drug.

5. The method according to claim 4, further comprising calculating a last day when said patient has taken said second prescription based on said date of dispensing and on said dosage if said first and last names are substantially identical, determining a length of time elapsed between said last day of taking said second prescription drug and a first day of dispensing said first prescription drug, and identifying said first prescription drug as newly prescribed for said patient if said length of time exceeds a predetermined time interval.

6. The method according to claim 4, further comprising obtaining each pre-stored record for said patient, accessing a list of illnesses to determine each illness treatable by each respective prescription drug contained in said each pre-stored record, accessing said list of illnesses to determine an illness treatable by said first prescription drug identified as newly prescribed, and ascertaining whether said first prescription drug is a replacement for another prescription drug previously taken by said patient.

7. The method according to claim 6, further comprising calculating a last day when said patient has taken said another prescription drug based on said date of dispensing and on said dosage, determining a length of time elapsed between said last day of taking said another prescription

drug and a first day of dispensing said first prescription drug, and identifying said first prescription drug as said replacement if said length of time does not exceed a predetermined time interval.

8. The method according to claim 1, wherein said predetermined format further contains a prescriber name, a prescriber address, and a patient zip code.

9. The method according to claim 8, further comprising selecting every prescription drug identified as newly prescribed for each patient over a predetermined time interval, and sorting the selected prescription drugs according to at least one criterion selected from the following: a prescriber's name, a prescriber's address, a patient's zip code, a prescriber's specialty, a pharmaceutical sales territory, national-based reporting, ICD9 code.

10. A computer system for processing prescription data representing a plurality of prescription drugs, comprising:

means for arranging received prescription data that corresponds to a first prescription drug into a new record of a predetermined format containing an identifier for identifying said patient and further containing a first name of said first prescription drug;

means for accessing a plurality of pre-stored records of said predetermined format, each pre-stored record containing information on a plurality of prescription drugs previously prescribed for respective patients;

means for comparing said identifier in said new record with each identifier located in the pre-stored records to find a matching pre-stored record associated with said patient;

means for comparing said first name of said first prescription drug with a second name of a second prescription drug located in the found matching pre-stored record; and

means for identifying said first prescription drug as a new therapy start for said patient if said first name is not substantially identical to said second name.

11. The system according to claim 10, further comprising means for determining whether types of said first and second names are brand or generic if said first name is not substantially identical to said second name, means for converting one of said first and second names to the type of the remaining name if the types are different, and means for ascertaining an equivalency between said first and second names based on the converted name.

12. The system according to claim 10, further comprising means for collecting the pre-stored records over a predetermined time interval.

13. The system according to claim 10, wherein said predetermined format further contains a date of dispensing said prescription drug to said patient and a dosage of said prescription drug.

14. The system according to claim 13, further comprising means for calculating a last day when said patient has taken said second prescription based on said date of dispensing and on said dosage if said first and last names are substantially identical, means for determining a length of time elapsed between said last day of taking said second prescription drug and a first day of dispensing said first prescription drug, and means for identifying said first prescription drug as newly prescribed for said patient if said length of time exceeds a predetermined time interval.

15. The system according to claim 13, further comprising means for obtaining each pre-stored record for said patient, means for accessing a list of illnesses to determine each illness treatable by each respective prescription drug contained in said each pre-stored record, means for accessing said list of illnesses to determine an illness treatable by said first prescription drug identified as newly prescribed, and means for ascertaining whether said first prescription drug is a replacement for another prescription drug previously taken by said patient.

16. The system according to claim 15, further comprising means for calculating a last day when said patient has taken said another prescription drug based on said date of dispensing and on said dosage, means for determining a length of time elapsed between said last day of taking said another prescription drug and a first day of dispensing said first prescription drug, and means for identifying said first prescription drug as said replacement if said length of time does not exceed a predetermined time interval.

17. The system according to claim 10, wherein said predetermined format further contains a prescriber name, a prescriber address, and a patient zip code.

18. The system according to claim 17, further comprising means for selecting every prescription drug identified as newly prescribed for each patient over a predetermined time interval, and means for sorting the selected prescription drugs according to at least one criterion selected from the following: a prescriber's name, a prescriber's address, a patient's zip code, a prescriber's specialty, a pharmaceutical sales territory, national-based reporting, ICD9 code.

19. A computer-readable storage medium for storing a program code for, when executed, causing a computer to perform a method for processing prescription data representing a plurality of prescription drugs, said method comprising:

arranging received prescription data that corresponds to a first prescription drug into a new record of a predetermined format containing an identifier for identifying said patient and further containing a first name of said first prescription drug;

accessing a plurality of pre-stored records of said predetermined format, each pre-stored record containing information on a plurality of prescription drugs previously prescribed for respective patients;

comparing said identifier in said new record with each identifier located in the pre-stored records to find a matching pre-stored record associated with said patient;

comparing said first name of said first prescription drug with a second name of a second prescription drug located in the found matching pre-stored record; and

identifying said first prescription drug as a new therapy start for said patient if said first name is not substantially identical to said second name.